

PRESS RELEASE

COVID-19 in Sweden: the discrimination against long distance passenger rail must end

STOCKHOLM, 11th February 2021: despite being the country of Greta Thunberg, Sweden continues to treat airlines better during the current pandemic:

- **Already in April 2020, airlines received a half-billion euro support scheme¹. Sadly, long distance passenger rail operators did not, despite serving the same routes.**
- **Now the government is introducing new restrictions to stop COVID-19 infection from spreading – only 50% of the seats available on long distance passenger transport will be allowed to be sold– but the airlines are exempted**

On many long-distance routes in Sweden, trains compete with aviation. Through the new restrictions, airlines will gain yet another competitive advantage over rail.

It is also bad for the environment, due to the increased emissions that travelling by car and plane will cause. This is even confirmed by the government in its memorandum² on the new restrictions, admitting that greenhouse gas emissions may increase(!)

In addition, if the restrictions are intended to stop the spread of the infection, it is difficult to understand how it is less contagious to stay in a cramped and full aircraft cabin than on board a more airy long-distance train.

The European Union has tried to help:

The EU Commission has taken several measures to support the rail industry in the pandemic, for example by swiftly processing state aid applications and allowing EU Member States to abolish track access fees. Alas, so far, the Swedish government has not chosen to support commercial long distance passenger rail in any way.

ALLRAIL's President Dr Erich Forster stresses: *"during the pandemic, long-distance passenger rail operators in Sweden have lost a large part of their revenues & reported huge losses. The government's new restrictions will worsen the economic situation further – despite no evidence that trains are less safe than other transport modes³".*

This discrimination against long distance passenger rail must end - it is unprecedented in all of Europe! The Swedish government should reimburse operators for the additional cost and lost revenue caused by these new restrictions".

¹ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/aviation/news/sweden-gets-airline-bailout-green-light-from-eu/>

² Memorandum S2021 / 01286 "Temporary infection control measures for long-distance public transport", 09.02.2021

³ One of several independent analyses on this matter: [Rail still safer than road during Covid-19 \(rssb.co.uk\)](https://www.rssb.co.uk/news/rail-still-safer-than-road-during-covid-19)